

SARAH MERMAID

This is the story of a small girl who wants to swim. But Sarah does not want to swim like other people. Sarah wants to swim like a mermaid swims.

When Sarah is only **5 weeks old**, G'ma Penny carries her light form, swaddled in blankets, on a short hike, around the school across from Mom and Dad's home. Sarah feels the morning dew like watery air and her face relaxes in enjoyment.

Way, way back in her memory when she is **a small baby** in Dallas, Sarah sits in the shower on Mom's lap. Water dances down onto her and Mom. Sarah feels drops splash on her, then slide off and plunk down the drain. She blink-blink-blinks her bright blue eyes. This is fun. Sarah is making friends with water.

In **pre-school**, Sarah finds herself in the Sea Turtle group. Sometimes her family and friends call her, Sarah Starfish. She decides that she likes sea creatures.

During night-time baths, Sarah splashes and sings to her bathtub toys: star fish, frogs, and turtles. Other times, Sarah runs out to the backyard with the Big Bubble toy. She waves her wand and fills the air with bigger and bigger bubbles. She points at them and says, "Hey, look, there's a double bubble!"

Sarah begins to observe how sea creatures move in the water. Sea turtles swim pretty much in a straight line like this:

Boring. This is not what Sarah has in mind. She wants to swim like a mermaid.

The problem is, Sarah has never seen a mermaid, not a real one.

In summer, Sarah watches kids swooshing down the curving water slide near her Sugar Land home. At the end of the slide, the kids seem to fly off, then plunge deep into the water. There's no telling where they might surface and come up. This is a little scary.

At age 5, Mom takes a picture while Sarah and G'ma Penny hold hands and they jump into the Long Beach Yacht Club swimming pool. They go under together and then pop back up, shouting, splashing, and gulping for air. This is fun.

At G'ma's house Sarah plays with the backyard hose, runs and slides on the Slip and Slide, and shouts, "Look, G'ma. I see a rainbow in the hose spray." Sarah and her family eat out at a restaurant. G'ma Penny and G'pa Fred show her how to blow bubbles like a walrus. They all put short straws into their nostrils and blow bubbles in their water glasses. She knows that blowing bubbles is part of swimming.

One August visit, Sarah, **age 8**, discovers a mermaid poster hanging in G'ma's back bathroom. Multitudes of tiny fish surround the mermaid. Her long hair looks like tiny fish intertwined with seaweed. The mermaid is graceful (like Sarah's middle name, Grace). Her eyes are closed and she seems to be swimming under the water, just like a person stands. She blows bubbles until she needs to come up for air.

Aha! Now Sarah knows the secret. The secret is that mermaids swim vertically, not horizontally like people and sea turtles. **At age 10**, Sarah is vertical in water. She is practicing to swim like a mermaid. Her wet head flings back onto the surface of the water so that long strands of hair dangle like floating seaweed behind her. She is swimming vertically and she is a mermaid, a real live mermaid.

Today Sarah is **11 years old**. She may become the first mermaid who can swim vertically on some days and also swim horizontally on other days. Who knows?
We will just have to wait and see.

**HAPPY ELEVENTH (11th) BIRTHDAY TO SARAH GRACE WOODS,
born 04-05-2016.**